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SOUTH VIETNAM

- A. The Communist campaign to win control of South Vietnam is essentially one of political subversion in which military action plays an important role.
 - 1. This campaign is largely directed from Hanoi.
 - 2. The Communists are trying, by creating a sense of insecurity and depriving the Diem government of control of the peasantry, to pave the way for a final political takeover.
- B. The Communist military effort involves about 23,000-25,000 full-time military personnel and over 10,000 local auxiliaries.
 - 1. The bulk of Viet Cong forces are locally recruited or impressed South Vietnamese peasants, but some of their cadres and more complex equipment are infiltrated from North Vietnam.
 - 2. For lighter weapons and ammunition they rely primarily upon capture from government troops, and upon indigenous sources for food, shelter and other non-military supplies.
 - 3. The guerrilla effort could continue without outside support, but such support has almost certainly been essential to the recently improved Viet Cong effort.

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- C. South Vietnam's counter guerrilla effort has substantially improved in the past year with US assistance.
 - 1. Armed Forces regulars have increased to about 215,000 plus paramilitary forces of 75,000 Civil Guard, 100,000 Self Defense Corps, and some 40,000 citizens' irregular groups.
 - 2. Substantial weakness persist, however, such as lack of aggressiveness and firm leadership at all command levels, political interference, a high desertion rate, military abuse of the peasantry, and inadequate intelligence.
- D. To attack the problem of political support, the government has instituted complementary politico-military programs involving the construction of strategic hamlets and clear-and-hold operations.
 - 1. These programs are meeting some success--over 5,000 hamlets are reported completed, but vary in effectiveness primarily because of administrative weaknesses.
 - 2. The Government tends to view strategic hamlets as a panacea, and to underestimate the importance of systematic political consolidation of military gains.

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- E. The Communists are believed aiming to win control of South Vietnam without resorting to overt military attacks from the North.
1. They evidently hope that a combination of military pressure and political deterioration will either create conditions for delivering a coup de grace or lead to a political settlement, as in Laos, favorable to their efforts.
 2. They also remain ready to exploit any favorable opportunity such as a non-Communist coup against Diem.
- F. With US help, South Vietnam probably stand a good chance to contain the Communists militarily.
1. However, the government's methods of operating have reduced its effectiveness, politically, and militarily.
 2. The Diem government has alienated many educated Vietnamese, and failed to win positive loyalty from its people.
 3. It is unlikely that US involvement can be substantially curtailed or a lasting reduction in the Communist threat achieved so long as present political conditions persist.

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